

# Does Society Keep Lent?



less, perchance, the play happens to be one which is psychological or has as its basic motive some real thought. The frivolities of light music and the funny comedy are absolutely tabooed. The opera and the serious play are indulged in, but only in moderation. However it is quite proper to go to a concert, a musicale or a recital.

As a matter of fact, it is undoubtedly a very trying situation for the social leader to decide exactly where the line should be drawn. The easiest way out, naturally, is to go away from New York and let new surroundings and new conditions solve the problem which is such a hard nut to crack on Fifth avenue.

Doubtless the peculiarly open winter which New York has experienced this year, so materially unlike any other winter in the history of the city, has influenced many people in their conception and desire of observing Lent. It seems rather an unusual and impossible thing to experience the Lenten feeling when there is a glorious and beautiful Easter sunshine in the air, when the sky, the earth and the people about you all exult with a joyous and glorious ecstasy. It is almost like trying to conceive of having a Fourth of July in a blizzard.

Weather conditions and geography have so much to do with religion, morality and patriotism that it is almost difficult to dissociate them. From the standpoint of the Church this has been a most unfortunate winter for devotion, and that probably is why the cynical observer says that the observance of Lent in New York is going out of fashion.

Several centuries ago it was the fashion for the society leaders of Rome—probably they had their four hundred the same as we have now—to journey up to the Mediterranean shore of what is now France and called Riviera and rest and recuperate for a couple of months. The gayeties of Rome, the social strain, the elaborate banquets, the unceasing attention to social details, left these same society leaders in a very fagged and frazzled condition.

They went to the Riviera to rest, to restore their complexions and their health.

It proved to be a most successful and efficacious treatment. They did not do it for any religious obligation. In fact any such idea as an observance of Lent had not yet come to their understanding. They did it purely for physical reasons.

In a way New York society leaders are doing much the same thing. Some go to the West Indies, some to Palm Beach, others to Lakewood, others to their nearby country places, and they go to rest. But still others and the great majority of them remain in New York to absent themselves from theatres, dances and gayeties, except as these gayeties are enjoyed sub rosa and to find amusement, pleasure and a renewed strength in Turkish baths, games of bridge, horseback riding in the park and for form sake and decency an occasional Lenten lecture or Lenten concert.

But really they have just as good a time, possibly better. Society keeps Lent, certainly, but it does not keep it in a strictly canonical sense.

It keeps Lent only as it suits its own sweet will and its own physical needs.

## Fashion Foibles in the Passing Throng

WHILE waiting in the busy station of one of our large cities recently I grew tired of reading and turned to watch the crowd which passed in a never ending stream. There were fat women, thin women, tall and short, old and young, dark and fair, rich and poor, and they one and all were aiming to be fashionably dressed, regardless of all else, of purse or figure.

My first impression was that they were all frightfully over dressed, loaded down with a veritable remnant counter collection of lace, ribbon, braid and buttons. My eyes began to ache for something simple and neat, and then across my vision came ostrich feathers till I wondered how there were enough birds to supply a tenth of the hats which went by. The shabbier the hat the more surely did it have its ostrich feather, and usually a white one.

I couldn't count the number of women with stringy, scraped back hair, twisted into a hard knot at the back of the head, and allowing a fringe of "weepers" (my name for those untidy short hairs) to hang over the collar.

On these dainty heads were perched at coquettish angles large velvet hats, much shirred and with no brim at the back, where great colored hatpins on spiral wires bobbed and jiggled with each turn of the head. Across these velvet plateaus trailed scraggly, dirty white ostrich plumes, usually hanging over one ear in aimless fashion. In front the brim shot out to an appalling distance and made the "offle a thing to marvel at.

These erections in the way of headgear were rivalled only by the toques or turbans, great heavy piles of braidwork in cloth straw, usually trimmed with a stiff wheel or rosette and shooting out and up over the face in that same hopeless manner.

The next thing that caught my eye was the inevitable shopping bag, Boston may be the only city that boasts of this particular form of bag, but certainly she makes up for any lack of it in other directions. Go where you will, in the electric or elevated cars, the trains or stations, these bags pursue one with undying certainty. I wonder if you know just the kind I mean; so Puritanical and serviceable looking, so respectable and utterly different in aspect from all other bags, usually of cloth, with leather trimmings and handles, and always bursting open with bundles and some edifying volume, tucked in at one side to make us sure we are not dreaming.

Why are these bags always overfilled, and why are they always clasped against the owner, like the bull's-eye of a target? Many a time I have wondered until my brain fairly ached, but could find no solution of my question. The stouter the woman the more surely does she clasp it against her person and sweep along with that hopelessly complacent air that only stout people seem able to attain.

Look along the row of people in an electric or elevated; every woman is either chatting over a sample with her neighbor or gazing with piercing eye at the cut of the sleeve on the woman opposite her. In either case she is holding like grim death to the inevitable shopping bag, swollen past all shapeliness in its endeavor to hold bundles of every shape and size. However, I have no doubt but that to most of these women shopping without those same bags would be anything but the comfortable diversion it now evidently is.

Recently I read an amusing article written by an English woman on the universal wearing of beads and neck ruching by our country women, and since then I have realized what an epidemic passed over our land for just those two things. Beads! Beads! May I never see a string again! And now that they can be bought the size of marbles their popularity is assured. A woman may be in a golf suit, a mackintosh or a velvet gown, yet there is her string of beads and her neck ruffing.

A short time ago it was diamond bars, or if not diamond, then glass, but at any rate, bars, and there was no getting away from them. The girl at the soda fountain had two in her collar and a string of pearls or beads the size of young marbles. At the theatre the person next me had the same bars and pearls, only they cost a small fortune. Wherever one looks lack of originality seems to be the glaring fact.

Little acts of courtesy are pleasant to see, and at the telephone office, in a crowded public place, I noticed an especially gracious act. People were pressing around the operators, and two shabbily dressed girls in vain tried to force themselves near enough to be heard. After patient waiting one got an opening and timidly asked for the number of some tailoring establishment.

The tired operator snapped back a reply to the effect that "no calls could be made unless the numbers were given," and I saw the girl shrink back and give a despairing glance at her friend, who was in the meantime vainly endeavoring to make head or tail out of the telephone book. A lovely girl, in exquisite clothes, who had evidently taken in the situation, then stepped up to the children, and with eyes of all upon her bent over them in the sweetest and most natural way, and after a whispered consultation began to look up their number for them and gain the attention of the operator.

DOES society keep Lent, you ask? Well, now, does society keep anything it should? Possibly not even the Ten Commandments. Of course society keeps Lent. It keeps it in its own way, however, and it keeps it to a certain extent very practically and very effectively.

It is society's resting spell. If it were not for Lent the social set of New York would be bedraggled and frazzled to the last extent. It would be a rowdy, unhealthy and witless combination of tired and fagged out people.

It is a blessed thing that Lent comes once a year.

Possibly it would be a better thing if Lent came twice a year.

Just what society would do without one Lent is a hard thing to imagine.

It is an old fashioned idea to think that society keeps Lent as a religious observance. It does not.

It does, however, keep Lent. It keeps Lent with both arms wide stretched. It welcomes it as it welcomes the cold shower in the morning, it welcomes the gentle massage, as it welcomes any health giving, delightful sensation that is not in the ordinary run of the daily events.

Lent does not mean in society perpetual churchgoing or any more devotion than ordinarily attains. It is not a period of churches, of psalms or of prayers. It is a period of restfulness to a certain extent, but activities greater than in other times.

This is perhaps more aptly proved than in any other way by the fact that during Lent the riding academies are thronged. Women who are too busy or too indolent to take exercise at other times of the year take advantage of the Lenten season to rush to the park, or to the country clubs, or wherever the place may be, and devote themselves to two or three hours a day of strenuous horse riding.

Usually it is the men who support the riding academies in New York for at least ten months out of the year. Then comes the holiday season for the proprietors of these same academies, and that is the Lenten or recuperative season for New York society. They, the fair ones, and the leaders in social sets know that there must be some reaction to the gayeties of the winter resorts and the summer resorts. So they take to the back of a horse or to a golf stick as the best reaction.

To be sure, these are not actually devotional exercises. There is no tone of repentance, no touch of humility, no self-abnegation about them whatever. On the contrary, the intention and the practice are quite the reverse from anything that may be found in religious teachings.

To be sure also the younger women do attend church a bit more than is their ordinary custom. The emotional and sus-

ceptible girl finds that prayers come from her soul to her lips more fervently and more easily than at other periods. She, however, is rather among the exceptions of the people who make up the class which is known as society. Her mother and her aunt, while they refuse and look with scorn and contempt upon invitations to receptions and dances, have no hesitancy in finding mild amusement at lectures and at games of bridge whist. The theatre is absolutely tabooed among those who are quite correct in their social demeanor. un-



The children's eyes went from her lovely hair to her white gloves and then her violets, and I thought it must be characteristic of her that as she turned to leave them she slipped her fingers into their grimy little hands with an accompanying smile that would have graced a queen.

Never shall I forget the look of adoration, bewilderment and gratitude on the faces of these children, and I realize that all onlookers, as well as myself, went to bed that night with the thought that after all the little things in life are those that count.

### Cuban Drug Stores.

THERE are two hundred and fifty drug stores in Havana for the 250,000 inhabitants, and the same ratio may be accepted for the other cities of Cuba. There are also many organizations and societies which employ doctors and their own pharmacists and dispense medicine to the society members. Physicians, however, do not often dispense medicine. The average number of prescriptions compounded is less than in the United States. The pharmacist is not permitted by law to prescribe, and the relation between physicians and pharmacists is friendly. Doctors prescribe a great amount of ready made or patented medicine. Prescriptions are the best part of the drug business in Cuba, as pharmacists there sell less of toilet articles, cigars, &c., than are sold in American drug stores. The customer is considered the proprietor of his prescription, which is returned to him after being entered in the prescription book. Pharmacists in the larger Cuban cities fill foreign prescriptions as well, consulting the pharmacopoeia of the country from which it comes. Cuban pharmacists generally prepare their own tinctures and ointments.

Cuban pharmacies have great difficulty in obtaining good clerks. The pay is \$25 to \$30 per month. They are free three times a week after six P. M. and also every second Sunday. Pharmacies are open from six in the morning until ten or eleven at night, Sundays included.